On seeing this couple, almost in a state of stark nakedness, seated on a bench among the cylinders and pistons of the engine, motionless for hours, we were necessarily reminded of the earthly paradise.

When among strangers the women are quiet and impassive, but when left to themselves they are full of fun and as playful as children. And this is generally the Indians' character.

The women take up a somewhat strange posture with their hands when they are standing. As they have no pockets to put them in, or fan with which to occupy them, or what have you, they place them upon their breasts which serve as supports for their arms which together rest upon them.

It would seem that such a habit would enlarge the breasts, but this is not so. The breasts are broad, it is true, but short and erect while the women are young. After expertoe virum, and having given suck to one or more children, the breasts shrivel and retract in a very unaesthetic manner, to tell the truth. It is to be noted that both men and women age early there, and also die early, and to this must be attributed the fact that there are few gray hairs even when there are faces and bodies so wrinkled as to make one believe that their owners must be as old as Methuselah.

I have gone into some detail in this matter of the breasts because it is known that in other regions, according to what is said, the women, when they give suck, give the nipple over the shoulder to the child which they are carrying on their backs. The fact is that no such thing occurs here.

The women, along with the men, have abundant, coarse, straight hair. They wear it rather long but not as long as they might, for it is shortened by wearing it in an unkempt fashion (which serves them as protection for eyes and forehead against the sun) and also by cutting.

They cut their hair, that on their faces as well as that on their scalps, with the jaw of a fish called palometa, which is armed with extraordinarily sharp teeth placed in two rows. The upper teeth dovetail exactly with the lower.

The palometa, the raya (ray--Translator) and the yacaré (alligator--Translator) are the scourge of those who bathe in this river and the lakes or pools which are fed by it. The palometa snaps, tears

It is worth noting that although they are such tipplers, they do not drink anything with their meals, not even water. On board ship the Indian guests we entertained refused all beverages while they were eating. After they had finished eating they preferred to drink water by crouching beside the river and drinking out of one hand. 264

The Indians are great beggars and yet miserly with their own possessions where whites are concerned. This is understandable since they are poor. [209]

It occurs to me that I should mention something which, though out of place here, I must set down for fear of forgetting it later: 142 145

The Indian boys, until they are eight or ten have disproportionately large bellies, so much so that they customarily bind them at the level of the navel. Later on they lose their bloated tummies and grow into well proportioned men.

It seems pertinent to me to say that the algarrobo belongs to our family of the garrobas (Ceratonia silicua) and the botanists know it under the name of Prosopis algarrobo. Its importance is immense in the domestic economy of the savages and country people. It deserves close attention for this reason. The crown grows to some ten meters in diameter but is not very dense, either because of the small number of leaves or because of their shape, yet it affords quite a fair amount of shade. The bark is very rough and is similar to that of the grape vine. 137

The vinal (Prosopis ruscifolia) is a very small tree, yet boasts a sizeable crown. It is remarkable for its thorns which are from ten to fifteen centimeters long and sometimes a centimeter thick, and very dangerous if one gets a jab from them. The leaves, which are about the same size as acacia leaves but more pointed and somewhat rough, are said to be an effective remedy for eye ailments.

The scientific name for the chañar is Gurlioea decorticans; and of the mistol, Ziziphus mistol.

The fruit of all these trees are avidly devoured by all manner of beasts, and the algarrobo and vinal pods are the best possible fattening fodder for horses and cattle [191].

A type of fruit which is also to be found in a wild state, but in very limited quantity in my experience , is the plum. This fruit has a pleasant taste and is all the more appreciated for its scarcity.